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A FAREWEL
S E R M O N

Preached at
UXBRIDGE,

September 29, 1728.

By THOMAS MOLE.

Published at the Request of the People.



L O N D O N :

Printed for RICHARD FORD at the *Angel*, and JOHN
GRAY at the *Cross-Keys* in the *Poultry*. 1728.

(Price Six Pence.)

A PARALLEL

SERMON

Preached at

UXBRIDGE,

September 29, 1728.

BY THOMAS MOLE.

Printed at the University of Oxford.

LONDON.

Printed for J. Sturges, at the Sign of the Ship, in St. Dunstons Church-yard, near the Temple.

(Printed by T. Sturges.)

T O
John Weedon, Esq;

S I R,

YOUR Station in the World,
Your Character as a faithful
Magistrate, the laudable Example
You set of constant Attendance
upon the publick Worship of God,
but above all, Your being a hearty
Friend to those Principles of Li-
berty, upon which our Dissent
from the Establishment is most
justly founded, are the chief Rea-
sons I had to make this publick
Address to You.

DEDICATION.

The continued Civility and Respect I have met with from You, though of itself it be a sufficient, yet is but a small Inducement, in Comparison with those Considerations, to inscribe this Sermon to You.

One is heartily pleased to meet with such Dissenters as have not forgot the genuine and good Principles upon which their Cause is founded, and who build not their Dissent upon such Reasons as favour of Faction and Enthusiasm, the Marks of servile and contemptible Minds, but on a due Regard to the sacred Authority of Jesus Christ, a Love to pure and undefiled Religion, and a Desire of the free and unconstrained Exercise of it.

This

DEDICATION.

This Satisfaction I have had in knowing You, who are farther highly to be honoured, in that, whilst You choose to worship God in the Purity of Religion, which is the true Beauty and Glory of it, You do behave to all others, however differing from You, with that Charity and Candor, which is the greatest Ornament of them that profess it.

One great Objection against the Cause of Liberty is, that it is an Enemy to the Peace and Order of Society, is commonly attended with Faction and Strife, and opens a Door to endless Contention and Division among Christians.

Though this is an Abuse only, and no natural Consequence of the
the

DEDICATION.

the Thing ; and though no more is to be said against Liberty on this Head, than what may be urged even against Christianity it self, which have both of them been the Occasion, but are neither of them the Cause of these unjustifiable Proceedings ; it is however most desirable to prevent the Maintainers of these Principles from falling into this Abuse of them, which though it renders them not less just and reasonable in themselves, does yet make them less amiable in the Apprehensions of Men, and hinders the Reception and Progress of them among them : Since nothing is more common than for what is owing to the Passions of Men, to be ascribed to their Principles, and for their evil Conduct, to be imputed to the Principles on which they act.

DEDICATION.

to have their good Cause blasphemed.

This was the End I had principally in View in composing this Sermon, and this my great Concern for that Society to which it was preached, upon my Removal from them. I had not the least Thought of ever making it publick, till importun'd to it by them that heard it, whose Request I have complied with, to shew my Regard and Respect for them, and in hopes hereby it will more effectually answer its intended Purpose.

It has farther afforded me this pleasing Opportunity of testifying my Sentiments of Gratitude and Respect to You, and assuring You, I shall ever, from Inclination as well

DEDICATION.

well as Duty, continue to pray for
the Happiness and Welfare of
You and Your Family, I re-
main

Your most obedient

most devoted

humble Servant,

T. MOLE.

Rotherith October

29. 1728.

2 Epistle to the CORINTHIANS
xiii. chap. 11. verse.

Finally Brethren, farewel: Be Perfect, be of good Comfort; be of one Mind; live in Peace; and the God of Love and Peace shall be with you.

Dearly Beloved,

THIS is the last time that I shall speak to you, in the Character of your Pastor and Teacher. We are henceforth no more to meet in that Society, and with that Constancy, in this Place, which we were wont; but the Course of our joint and social Worship is now arrived at its Period, and come to a Close.

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With

With what Pleasure and Delight I have performed the part incumbent upon me, in the Character and Relation wherein I have stood to you, I cannot easily express: But sure I am, that with Care, and a good Conscience, I have endeavoured to promote the Knowledge of the Truth as it is in Jesus, and have inculcated and persuaded you to the Practice of those Things, wherein the Truth and Excellency of Religion lies: Not concealing any Part, but declaring the whole of the Counsel of God, as becomes a Pastor towards the People he is among, so far as the time that I have been with you, as such, would permit.

There is a mutual Duty and Obligation to be observed by such while they live together, and that Relation subsists. And let me observe, that there is a Decency and Decorum, with which it behoves, and with which it becomes them to act when they part, and their Relation ceases. This is one of those critical Seasons in which Standers-by are more curious to observe us, and in which we our selves should be equally concerned, that they may observe nothing

thing but what they may approve and applaud in us ; nothing but what is lovely, and of good Report.

This was the Advice which the Apostle *Paul* addressed to the *Romans*, whose Case was not altogether unparallell'd to ours, speaking to the Gentile Converts, who were strenuous Assertors of their Christian Liberty, and opposed those Additions that were brought into the Church by the Converts from among the *Jews*: He says, *Let not then your Good be evil spoken of*, Rom. xiv. 16. "i. e. I allow that your Zeal for the Purity of Christianity, and your Liberty from the Observation of those burdensome Rites with which others corrupt it, is most lovely and laudable. It is a Good, it is the best of Causes that you are embarked in the Profession and Defence of. But let me exhort you to all necessary Care of mixing Uncharitableness, or Contention, or any other Vice with the use of your Liberty, that your good Cause be not traduced and blasphemed by your imprudent and injudicious Management of it. *Let not then your Good be evil spoken of.*

One would think it needless to admonish Christian Societies, with what Purity, and Peace, and Prudence, it becomes them in all Cases to act ; and I would hope, that you have as little Need and Occasion for that, as any other whatsoever. But so great is the Importance of these Things to our Acceptance with God ; so necessary to preserve our Good from being evil spoken of, and so great is my Concern that you be found in the Practice of them, that I cannot but esteem it suitable and seasonable on this present Occasion, to address and exhort you in the Words of the Apostle, wherein he takes his Leave of the Church of *Corinth*. *Finally Brethren, farewell : Be Perfect ; be of good Comfort ; be of one Mind ; live in Peace, and the God of Love and Peace shall be with you.*

In these Words we have these three Things observable.

- I. The Apostle *Paul*, like a wise and good Man, and a faithful Minister of Jesus Christ, and like one who was to serve as an Example to all others in time to come, at his taking

ing Leave of the *Corinthians*, blesses and prays for them, and wishes all manner of Peace and Happiness unto them.

II. He offers them an Exhortation and Advice suitable to the Condition and Circumstances they were in.

III. He strengthens his Exhortation with a most considerable Motive ; and assures them, that if they behave and act in the manner he exhorts to, Almighty God, whom they serve and worship, will be with them, and bless them ; that though they be deprived of his Presence, if they follow his Advice, they shall secure the divine Presence and Favour among them.

I. The Apostle *Paul*, like a wise and good Man, and a faithful Minister of Jesus Christ, and like one who was to serve for an Example to all others in time to come, at his taking Leave of the *Corinthians*, blesses and prays for them, and wishes all manner of Peace and Happiness unto them.

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The loveliest Image we can form of this Life, is taken from that Society which we maintain with one another, wherein Love and Friendship cement our Hearts to perfect Union. And Love and Friendship, when they are founded in Virtue, make up the greatest Happiness that we ever meet with in the Course of our human Life. This serves us as an Image, though in the highest Degree, in which it is met with on Earth, it is but a faint and feeble Image of the Life which Angels and Saints lead, and will lead for ever in Heaven. Those Rivers of Pleasure are Rivers of Love, that flow from the right Hand of the Throne of God ; they arise there as the Fountain, and have a Stream leading to every Heart ; and in this consists the Beauty, and Order, and the uniform Felicity of the World above.

The Apostle *Paul* appears in a great Measure to have partook of this Spirit of Love, which is the Spirit of Happiness, and the Spirit of Heaven, and to have abounded in Affection towards those Persons, amongst whom he had planted and preached the Gospel, an Affection, that shewed itself on all possible

sible Occasions, but never rose to such a Degree of Tenderness, as when he took his Leave of them, and was forced to tell them, *They should see his Face no more.* It is then we behold him under the greatest Concern, when his Affection and Grief meeting together, kindle and create a kind of Tumult in his Heart. And this we are to look upon, not as the workings of a natural Passion only, but as the Efforts of a spiritual Affection and Concern for their infinitely better and more noble Part, as an Affection that flowed from a Principle of Virtue, and was built upon that relation which they stood to one another in, as Brethren in Christ Jesus.

The blessed Apostle, who had the Interest of Virtue so much at Heart, and the Prospect of Heaven so continually in his Eyes, cannot be supposed in his affectionate Concern that he shewed for them, to confine his Prayers and Wishes on their behalf, to the temporal Pleasure, and Prosperity of this Life. We must take into our Minds that Love of Virtue, that Hope of Heaven, that Faith in Christ, and Concern for the Souls of his Christian Brethren, which appear al-
ways

ways to have animated his Breast, in order to conceive of the Fulness of his Meaning, when for the last time he bids his Brethren farewell. This kind Address, in the close of his Discourse, takes in the wide and extensive Prospect of Life and Death, and an endless Hereafter. And herein he wishes them a Concurrence of those Blessings, as should make them compleatly happy in them all; *Finally Brethren, farewell.*

The Simplicity of this Expression seems not to lead us to such an extensive Sense of the Apostle's Address to them, but the Emphasis of the Original is scarce well enough preserved, nor the Sense of it sufficiently expressed in the Translation. The original Word was a solemn Form of Speech, used by the *Greeks*, in saluting, or when they parted with their Friends, whereby they testified their Affection and Concern for them, and wished them Prosperity, to be the constant Attendant of their future Life and Days. This, though in the usage of the Heathen *Greeks*, it stood only for the Happiness of the present Life, yet cannot be understood in the Mouth of the Apostle, exclusive of the

the spiritual Blessings of the Gospel, and the future Rewards of the heavenly State. Nor can we suppose, that in taking his solemn and final Leave of Persons so dearly beloved by him, he should confine his Regards to the present Life, and neglect to pray for them in relation to their eternal and most valuable Interests, which he appears always to have had so much at Heart ; so that the Apostle's Meaning may be thus paraphrased.

“ Beloved Brethren, As I am now about
 “ to finish my Discourse, and take my
 “ Leave of you, I cannot conclude, (so
 “ great is my Affection towards you) with-
 “ out ardent Wishes and sincere Prayers,
 “ that Happiness of every kind may attend
 “ you : May God avert from you all those
 “ Afflictions which embitter Life, and
 “ make it hard to be born : May Health,
 “ and Peace, and happy Days, be the
 “ Portion given you by the Father of
 “ Mercies : May the Virtues and Graces
 “ of the Christian Religion be the Orna-
 “ ment, and its Promises and Comforts
 “ the Joy of your Life ; and when this
 “ fleeting Scene of Sin and Sorrow shall
 “ vanish, and pass away from sight, may
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"it change to endless and eternal Glory ;
 "and may the Angels of God give you
 "a safe Conveyance into that heavenly
 "Happiness, which no Thought can lay
 "hold of, and which no Art can de-
 "scribe.

And as I am now in Presence to take
 leave of you, which the Apostle does
 here in writing of the *Corinthians*, I
 would endeavour to do it after the
 Manner and Example, and in the Spirit
 and Temper of the Apostle in the Words
 of the Text.

Finally, Brethren, farewell. I must now
 part with you, but be assured, never
 with that Love and Affection which I
 have ever borne you. Suffer me there-
 fore what I have often done in Heart
 to do in Words ; to wish you, in the
 greatest Plenty, all the Blessings of Life.
 May God Almighty give every one of
 you a Mind truly virtuous and good,
 and Wisdom, to make all other Things
 give Place to Virtue and Religion :
 May your Hearts be established in the
 Faith, and Hope, and Obedience of the
 Gospel ; and may the Cause of Truth,
 and Liberty, and Charity, and univer-
 sal Virtue, ever prosper and flourish
 amongst

amongst you. Having explained the first Observation, I proceed to the next.

II. That the Apostle, in the Words of the Text, offers to the Persons, of whom he takes his Leave, an Exhortation and Advice suitable to the Condition and Circumstances they were in.

1. *Be Perfect.* This part of the Exhortation has a quite different Meaning from what it may seem from our Translation, which is far from being accurate and exact in this Matter. For the right Understanding of this, we must look into the State of the Church of *Corinth*, and into the meaning of the original Word.

There had been false Teachers sprung up amongst the Christians at *Corinth*, who had made a Sedition there, and divided them into Parties. The Faction was chiefly maintained by a Judaizing Teacher, who, with great Sharpness and Acrimony of Speech, inveighed against the Person, and against the Doctrine of St. *Paul*; gave out many hard Sayings, and raised many false Reports, and spread several injurious Calumnies against the holy Apostle. This Person,

St. Paul in the preceding Chapter, calls *a Thorn in the Flesh*, and a *Messenger of Satan sent to buffet him*, in Allusion to Numbers xxxiii. 55. where the *Israelites* are threatened, that if they should spare any of the Inhabitants of the Land, which the Lord God had commanded them to destroy, and suffer them to remain and continue in it, *They should prove Pricks in their Eyes, and Thorns in their Sides, and should vex them in the Land wherein they were to dwell.*

Now the Apostle exhorts them, that as they had been thus divided, and drawn into Parties, they would lay aside their Contention, and return to a State of Peace and Union, that the whole Church which had been divided, and as it were rent in twain, might again become perfectly and entirely one. And to express this, he makes use of a Word, which properly signifies the replacing of dislocated and disjointed Members, and restoring them to their proper Places and Uses, whereby the Crasis and Constitution of the Body, from being disordered, is restored sound and whole. We may therefore understand the Apostle, as
addressing

addressing them in this manner. "As there
 "have been Strife and Contention among
 "you, consider, I pray you, the fatal
 "Consequences and Effects hereof: For
 "like as in the State of the Body, when
 "all its Members are dislocated, and
 "disjointed, and incapable of discharg-
 "ing their proper Functions, in Con-
 "sequence whereof, the whole perish-
 "es and comes to ruin ; such is the
 "State of a Church or Society, when
 "Discord and Contention have disunited
 "and disjointed them. And as you have
 "been chargeable with Guilt of this kind,
 "I exhort you to return and pray, that
 "you may be restored to a State of per-
 "fect and entire Health ; to a sound
 "Crafsis and Constitution, which as to a
 "Society, consists in its perfect and entire
 "Union. This is the first part of the
 "Apostle's Exhortation.

And tho' there may not be room to ap-
 ply this particular Exhortation to you, nor
 to accuse you of that Guilt with which
 the *Corinthians* are charged, yet suffer me
 from hence, in a most friendly manner,
 to advise and exhort you, as you have
 the Prosperity of your Society at Heart,
 to preserve and maintain a Spirit of
 Peace

Peace and Concord among you. And may you persist and prosper in that Unanimity and Union, which amongst you, I would hope, has been never yet broke.

2. The second part of the Exhortation he gives them, is, *Be of good Comfort.*

It is not certain whether this Exhortation relates to the Times when Christianity suffered Persecution, and lay under Disgrace: When the Teachers of it were imprisoned, or driven into Corners, and the professing of it was accounted a Crime worthy of Death. Or whether it refers to the common Troubles and Afflictions of Life. But whichever it refers to, it shews the Affection of the Apostle for them, that he was mindful of their Sufferings, and sympathized with them therein; and was concerned to comfort, and support them, under them. And it shews the Excellency and the Efficacy of the Christian Doctrine, that whatsoever was their Trouble, of whatever kind, or however great Degree, it yielded and afforded true Peace and Comfort unto all such as sincerely embraced it. The Apostle ventures, upon the Credit of Christi-

Christianity, to exhort all Believers to be of Comfort, let their Trouble and Affliction be whatever it will.

The present Life is but a State of imperfect Happiness. Sorrow and Suffering from various Quarters, break in upon our Peace, and trouble the Current of our Tranquillity and Joy. But yet there is enough in the Thought of a God, and a divine Providence to afford Comfort to all who believe them; especially if we consider the other Grounds of Comfort which are further superadded by the Revelation of Christ. The Faith, and Hope, and Happiness of the Kingdom of Heaven, opened under the Gospel, make all such as are in it be of Peace and good Comfort, let what will befall them; and those outward Afflictions, which tear others to pieces, leave the Peace, and the Comfort, and the inward Joy of such, entire and unbroke.

There is a Course of Life, in which a Vein of Wickedness lies latent and hid, and runs through the whole, which makes it impossible for such as engage in it to be of any Comfort at all; such a Train of Guilt as is carried on, and
 conti-

continued from one end to the other, is a perpetual Source of Diffidence and Distrust in God, and indeed hoping in God, is in such, mocking him. But let it be remembered, to the immortal Honour of Virtue and Religion, that they are a Fountain of Happiness to the human Nature; and Peace, and Comfort, and solid Joy, are the sweet Streams that do perpetually flow from it.

This is the Privilege of all such Persons as believe in God, and believe in the Gospel. Those Afflictions and Evils of human Life, which drive others to Distraction, and to their Wits end, send them unto God, and to the Word of his Grace; to God, who is a God of all Consolation, and to the Gospel, which breathes forth Peace and Comfort to every troubled and afflicted Soul. And since the Christian Religion does so fully provide for the Peace and Comfort of such as embrace it, under all that Variety of Trouble with which their Life aboundeth, it cannot be amiss to apply this part of the Apostle's Exhortation to you in your present Case. You may justly be supposed to be under

der some Concern and Apprehensions of Fear from your now being about to be destitute of a Pastor, but let me exhort you to *be of good Comfort* ; be not cast down, nor distrust the Care of divine Providence, for if you cherish the Principles of Virtue in your Hearts, and bring forth the corresponding Fruits in your Lives, God himself will provide you all those outward Helps, which are necessary to prepare you for his heavenly Kingdom.

3. The next Branch of the Apostle's Exhortation is, *Be of one Mind*.

This Exhortation of the Apostle does not refer to a Sameness and Unity of Opinion, but to a Sameness and Unity of Affection and Love. There appears not in the whole of the Christian Religion any the least Expectation, and indeed, in Reason, there is no Possibility that all Men should ever come to be of the same Opinion, and to a perfect Agreement in their Sentiments of Things ; but on the contrary, many Parts of the Scriptures are built upon the Supposition of the Impossibility of the Thing, and lead us to apprehend it a thing never to be expected

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pected at all. Such are all those frequent Exhortations to Moderation and Charity, to Peace and Forbearance, for which there could be no possible Room, was it not supposed that there would be Differences of Opinion among Christians. There is not the least Hint dropt, that they shall ever cease, but rather on the contrary, that Christians shall always continue to have Occasion and Opportunity for the Exercise of these Virtues.

Should we suppose that God had formed the Minds of all Men alike, in Consequence of his Intention to promote this supposed Sameness of Opinion among them, yet so different are the Passages through which Men travel into Life, so various and contradictory the Methods of Education in which they are trained up, the Precepts and Instructions they receive, and the Patterns and Examples that are set before them, that there does not seem to be any thing in Nature more impossible, than that all Persons should come to a perfect and exact Agreement in their Sentiments and Opinions ; but it is furthermore certain, that Mens Capacities and Abilities, and the Talents

of Reason, and Wisdom, and Understanding, which they receive from God, are as various and different as their Education, and Precepts, and Examples, which they receive from Men, which makes the Impossibility of the Thing appear still more plain and obvious.

The wisest and the best of Men have gathered many Prejudices and Prepossessions in their way into this World, which nothing but the Light of another World will be able to shew them their Mistakes in ; and all wise and good Men are so far convinced of this, as to agree, that a Unity of Affection is as necessary, as a Unity of Opinion is impossible to be procured, and that the former is the only Remedy that can effectually prevent those Evils, which would otherwise flow from a want of the latter.

In this Light we are to consider those Exhortations interspersed in the Scriptures, that Christians should all be of one Mind ; that is, that though it is impossible their Opinions, yet their Affections should be the same, and every one love his Brother as himself, though in many Things he may think quite different from him.

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This is the best Sense, and indeed the only Sense in which we can be all of one Mind, this Unity of Affection is the Glory of Christ's Church on Earth, and one of the best Preparations for the celestial State, where alone Unity of Sentiment will prevail : This Exhortation therefore the Apostle may be supposed equitably to offer to the *Corinthians*, since Unity of Affection might be reasonably expected as the Fruit of an Exhortation, whereas, Unity of Sentiments, in any one particular, could be expected only from Reasoning and Argumentation.

Suffer me therefore, my Brethren, to address this Advice and Counsel of the Apostle unto you. Let the same Spirit of Charity and Christian Love warm all your Hearts, and be ye kindly affectioned one to another ; seek not after, nor aim at, nor ever insist upon an exact Agreement of Opinion, in all the Members of your Christian Society, for that it inculcates the Sameness of Affection, where there is a Difference of Opinion, is one of the greatest Excellencies of the Christian Religion ; and nothing has more hindered

dered this Unity of Affection, which the Apostle exhorts to in the Text, than that fanciful, and imaginary, and impossible Scheme of bringing all Men to an Uniformity of Sentiment and Opinion. No Christian Church, or Society, was ever set up and cemented, but thousands have been disjointed and broke upon this Bottom; but Love and Affection is the only, and that a likely way to cement, not only particular Societies, which is greatly to be wished for, but the whole Body of Christians, which is above all Things to be desired. *Above all Things, Brethren, put on Charity, which is the Bond of Perfectness.*

4. The next and last Branch of the Apostle's Exhortation is, *Live in Peace.*

The former relates to the inward Affection of the Heart, this to the outward Actions and Conduct of the Life. And herein he exhorts them to such a Conduct and Behaviour, as will let all Men see, that a Principle of Love has the Ascendant in their Hearts. Peace is a great Part of Religion. We are to live in Peace with all Christians,

ans, with all of different Denominations, and even with those who are no Christians, and such as are out of the Interests of Religion in general. It were to be wished, that all Parties of Christians would cease to look on themselves as Parties, and consider themselves as engaged in common in the Cause of God and Virtue, and the Christian Doctrine, not in Opposition to one another, but to the ungodly and unbelieving World ; for all the other Marks of Distinction are only so many Marks of the Corruption of Christians, and could this Spirit of Love and Peace once prevail, how perfectly should we all be knit together in one, how amiable would this Spirit of Union make the Face of Religion look in the World, which now looks so deformed, through the Opposition and Contention of such as profess it ?

But tho' through the Passions and Prejudices of Men this is too great a Happiness to be expected by us, yet surely one may with Probability expect it of those, who are not only of the same Religion, and of the same Denomination, but Members of the same
worshiping

worshipping Society too; especially considering that the Interest of Religion, the Honour and Reputation of your good Cause, and the Prosperity of your Society, engage you to this, and are all in part embarked on this particular Bottom.

Let me therefore exhort you to such an outward Deportment and Behaviour, as is correspondent to Love and Affection in the Heart, such as will shew you to be of a Christian Temper and Spirit, and be an Ornament and a Glory to the Christian Name.
Live in Peace.

Such is the Exhortation the holy Apostle gave the *Corinthians*, whose Church had been divided and torn to pieces by Contention and Strife. He advises them, " That as they had resembled a Body, whose Members are disjointed, and rendered unfit to perform the Offices necessary to its Life, so they would now resemble it in its restored State, wherein each is returned to its proper Place, and Function, and Use, and enabled to contribute to the Health of the whole.

" That

“ That they would take to themselves that Support and Comfort which their Religion affords them, under every Affliction and Trouble of Life.

“ That they would put on mutual and universal Charity, and as to Love and Affection, however heretofore they might have been alienated from one another, that they would now be of one Heart and of one Mind.

“ And that they would bring forth the genuine Fruit of this Principle within, in a peaceable, quiet and inoffensive Behaviour towards all Men, giving no Uneasiness, and creating no Disturbance in the Church of God.”

And this leads me to the next Observation.

III. The Apostle in the next Place strengthens his Exhortation with a most considerable Motive, and assures them, if they behave in the manner he exhorts to, Almighty God, whom they serve and worship, will be with them, and bless them; and though they be deprived of his Presence, yet, if they follow

follow his Advice, they will secure the divine Presence and Favour among them.

This the Apostle promises them as the greatest Blessing he could well think of, *q. d.* Live and act after the manner I have exhorted you ; and to secure the Success of my Exhortation, I would mention a Motive that can hardly fail to produce it in all serious Minds, that is, that the God of Love and Peace shall be with you.

The Motive is two-fold.

1. He assures them, That God is a God of Love and Peace, *i. e.* he is the Author and Promoter of these Principles, and the Friend and Protector of those Persons, who reduce them to Practice. He is the Author of a Religion which we are to practise now, and of a Happiness which we are to enjoy hereafter, of which Love and Peace are essential and principal Branches ; and consequently you may be assured, this Exhortation is such as God authorises, and as you ought to obey.

2. He assures them, That God will be pleased with, and present among such where he observes Love and Peace to prevail.

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This

This is the Glory, and ought to be the Ambition of all Christian Churches, to have the Presence of the God of Love and Peace among them. What other end is our religious Worship and meeting together for, but to seek after Heaven and eternal Life, and frequently to meet with Almighty God, that we may obtain from him all those necessary Helps, without which, our seeking would be unsuccessful and vain? This in the Nature of the Thing, supposes the Object to be present with us, and our Minds intent and fixed upon it ; and thus God is undoubtedly present with every sincere Worshiper. Moreover, wherever the Substance and Circumstances of the Worship are worthy of God, and agreeable to his Will, he, no doubt, is present among them, with a particular Attention, and a peculiar Regard ; and finally, where the Temper of Mind and Disposition of Spirit in the Worshipers is purely virtuous and agreeable to the Nature of God and Religion, there is God present, not only with a Pleasure in the Worship, but with Affection to the Persons that offer it ; with an Ear open to their Prayers, and with a full

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Intention

Intention to pour out upon them the Fulness of all Blessings, both of Soul and of Body. The Eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, with a Pleasure, like that with which our Eye fixes and dwells upon what in our Hearts we love and admire. The Eye of the Lord, which is over all the Earth, settles as it were with Pleasure upon such sincere Worshipers, wherever he observes them, tho' but *two or three are gathered together*. And these are the Persons he will delight to bless ; these the Societies where he will delight to dwell.

Thus I have led you thro' the Words of the Text, where you see the manner in which the holy Apostle closes his Address to, and takes his Leave of the *Corinthians* ; the Exhortation he offers them, and the Motives with which he endeavours to secure the Success of it.

I shall now proceed to make some Observations on what has been said.

1. We may observe, that the Apostle's taking his Leave of the *Corinthians*, was not owing to, or attended with any Disaffection or Indifferency towards them, but was consistent with the highest Love, and they yet continued to have his best

Wishes. His Love to them was such, that Absence and Distance, no not abusive Reproaches, were able to wear out. He had finished his personal Ministry among them, some time before the writing of this Epistle, and in the mean while he had met with very injurious Treatment from some that were among them; and notwithstanding that he could not but take Notice of their undeserved Usage of him, yet when he bids them Adieu, it is not in Anger, or Hatred, or Ill-will, but rather with peculiar Affection and Concern for them; and their unchristian Behaviour, instead of exciting his Resentment, serves rather to enliven his Respect for them, and produces in him the most hearty Desires, that Peace and Happiness, and the Blessing and Presence of God may be among them.

2. We may observe, that Christians should not be against hearkening to the Exhortations and Advice of their Pastors and Teachers, tho' it be on such ungrateful and unwelcome Occasions as their parting with, and taking Leave of them: I mean in things of Truth and Duty, which relate to the Office of such,
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and not in any Things foreign to their Character ; and I hope this Christian and serious Exhortation to Peace and Charity, to Love and Union, shall not be the worse received, or the lightlier esteemed, or the less regarded, for its coming from one that is about to leave you. Consider it is part of our Religion ; and tho' it comes from one that leaves you, it is from one that loves you, proceeds from a Spirit of Meekness and Charity, and your following it, is the best Method you can take to secure the Presence of God among you.

3. We may observe, that Christians should value the Presence and Blessing of God among them, above the Presence of any Man whatsoever. The Favour and Blessing of Almighty God goes a great Way towards forming the Mind, and turning the Dispositions of it more effectually to Virtue and Religion. The Presence and Favour of Almighty God is the best Security to us, that in a World of Errors and Mistakes about Virtue and Religion, we shall surely know wherein the Truth and Reality of them lies : And if God be among us, we are more likely to use the instrumental Part of Religion

Religion to the best Purposes, and to have all the sacred Institutions of the Gospel made useful, and profitable, and edifying to our Souls. But no Man whatever can secure us of these Blessings.

4. We may observe, that the God of Love and Peace is not likely to be present, nor to be pleased with such Persons and Societies who live in Hatred and Enmity, and are at War among themselves. The Blessing of God is not an idle Fancy, nor the Presence of the Almighty an empty Dream. There is the utmost Reason to think, that God is in a peculiar manner with his Grace and Favour present to religious Persons and Societies; and that the more remarkably, as he sees Goodness and Virtue in their Purity and Power rooted and growing, and prevailing among them; but Persons and Societies, where Religion and Virtue have scarce any footing, can hardly expect to be blessed with the Presence of a holy God, nor disorderly and contentious ones hope for the Presence of the God of Love and Peace.

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God knows, my Friends, that I make not this Observation at all, to reflect on or accuse any of you ; nor is it in the least designed for any other end, but in order to persuade you, who I would fain hope are already resolved to be perfectly knit together in one.

I would be far from representing any part of Religion, as if it was the whole, or crying up one Point with such a disproportioned Zeal, as tends to depress and depreciate the rest ; but yet let me observe, that there is not a more capital and essential Branch of Religion, than Love and Peace. If you therefore hope, and I know you do hope for the Presence and Blessing of Almighty God among you, let me exhort you, in relation to your selves, *Be ye Perfect ; be of good Comfort, be of one Mind, live in Peace, and the God of Love and Peace shall be with you.* And as to my self, I exhort you to part with me with the same Spirit of Love and Friendship, tho' I would not wish with the same Degree of Concern and Grief, with which, Brethren, I bid you finally farewell. For in that little Experience I have had of Life, there is nothing yet
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I have tasted so bitter in it, as this my parting with you, in all its Circumstances; and should this be followed with a Breach of Affection, and a Dissolution of that Charity *which is the Bond of Perfectness*, this would be more bitter than even our parting itself.

But I hope God has already led you into a better Sense of Religion, than will suffer you to exclude Love and Charity out of it; and that as you are obliged by your Religion to love them that hate you, you will be far from hating and despitefully using one, who professes to love you in Sincerity and Truth. There is such an open Inconsistency between your so doing, and any Pretences to Religion, that your Understanding will lead you easily to observe, and the Grace of God within you, to abhor and avoid it.

But finally, and to conclude, I shall close all with a brief Summary of the foregoing Discourse.

My dearly beloved Friends and Brethren, the Time is come, that you and I must no longer live as we have heretofore, but now are to take our final Leave of one another. Be assured,

fured, that out of no Dislike, or Hatred, or Ill-will, am I induced to leave you ; and to convince you of this, I heartily wish and pray in your Behalf, that Peace, and Joy, and the divine Blessing, may be the Portion of your Life, and the Pleasure of your Days ; and since so sincere and true is my Affection for you, be not backward to admit a kind Word of Exhortation suitable to the Circumstances of your present State. Out of a sincere Regard to the Welfare and Prosperity of your Persons and Society, I exhort you to be perfectly knit together in one, take friendly Counsel among your selves, and act with a Unanimity, as tho' it were of one Man. Be not cast down, tho' you are at present bereft of one, but be of Courage and Comfort, for God will provide you another Pastor, if you live and act thus, and seek unto him ; and what is more, he will himself be with you. And that you may the more effectually secure this Blessing to your selves, be of one Heart and of one Mind, and let all Men know that you are Christ's Disciples by your loving one another. And not only let Love

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prevail in your Hearts and Minds, but let Peace rule in your outward Behaviour to one another ; and then God, who so highly esteems, and sets so great a Value upon Love and Peace, will indeed be with you.

And may we all be found to walk in the same way of Righteousness Life, tending to the same blessed and happy End, that when a few Days and Years are gone and past, we, who now part in Grief, may meet with Joy in the House of our heavenly Father, where we shall have none of these painful Separations any more.

F I N I S.